

A-G [rinnell,
E. + J.]
S. Calif. Towhee
1900

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IT-SAY-YA, ZUÑI.

From painting by E. A. Burbank.

IT-SAY-YA, ZUÑI
1923
The Indian

sions in this career of painting Indians ; a superficial acquaintance, in one way, but enabled by unspoiled eyes to arrive at the foundations of comprehension.

C. F. L.

BIRDS OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA.

BY ELIZABETH AND JOSEPH GRINNELL.

Authors of "Our Feathered Friends."

THE TOWHEE.

There is no more lovable bird in all Southern California than Anthony's Towhee. He is sometimes called "the brown robin," on account of a fancied likeness to the common robin. The towhee is of a dull brown in color, save a rusty red or tawny patch under the tail, and a mottled throat-patch not observable at a distance. The bill is short and conical, and when on the ground the bird appears to rest its breast on its feet, giving it a squatty figure. The towhee is not admired for its song, since an abrupt metallic chirp is as much as it seems to

know. It is for its gentle and fearless character that it is appreciated. The towhee may be seen anywhere in the arroyos and foothills, but is at home in anybody's grounds, where its confidence attracts the attention of strangers. It is seldom on the wing, never very high in air, choosing to walk rather than fly. It will not fly unless cornered. When running, it hops rapidly, with a sidewise appearance like a dog on a trot. It re-



C. M. Davis Eng. Co. TOWHEE—FROM LIFE.

minds one of domestic fowls, for it is always with them scratching in the litter of the stables. It runs in and out of the brush or woodpiles like a mouse, and loves to stay under the orange trees scratching among the leaves and mulching. One might take the sound it makes to be that of some large bird or animal ; and, peeping, be surprised by the tiny plump creature making the leaves fly in all directions. It is confiding, and loves to wait at the door or window for crumbs, preferring sweet cookie to bread, and picking at tiny green leaves as soon as they appear in the lettuce bed.

We have many times brushed a towhee from the doorsteps when opening the screen, and it is a common thing to catch them in the woodshed where they are sure to forget at what particular spot they gained admittance and fly distractedly in all directions. If it were not for our door and window screens the towhees would occupy our homes with us. In spite of their usual dull color we have known one exception. This individual bird had three white feathers in one wing which were moulted and re-appeared for four successive years. The sexes of this species are not distinguishable. The towhee breeds mostly in April and May, choosing shrubs or low trees for its nesting places. The nest is of twigs, grass, paper and string, lined with any soft material. One pair of towhees chose the fur from a buffalo skin hung out on the balcony for an airing. Others, the hairs from a very old elk skin. Stray hairs from horses' tails are most often used, and we have often picked up these and hung them upon trees or posts on purpose to attract the attention of the towhees and other birds. One may induce the birds to use all sorts of odd material in nest-building by anticipating their needs and beginning in time.

The towhee lays three or four eggs, specked with black and brown on a pale-bluish ground. The young tumble out of the nest early, and may be picked up almost anywhere in the season. Indeed, at nesting-time, in a Southern California garden in which birds are numerous, the entire time of a trained nurse might be employed in caring for helpless little ones.

Unlike the mockers, who tell all about their nest before you ask them, the towhees are shy and quiet. We have seen them fly far past the nest and back again several times with food in their bills to be quite certain they are not observed. They may be sitting in a bush, or a tuft of pampas grass, or an orange tree and speak not a word though you could touch them with your hand, until you look straight at them, when they will whisk away with their familiar chirp. The young go about very much as the mockers, teasing for food, but in a less noisy and insistent way. They become self-supporting much earlier in life. Since they are not singers, no one cages these birds ;

and yet their enemies must be many, for there seem to be no more towhees in the garden this year than last, although we knew of six nests.

Still, not all the birds we miss have died an unnatural death. As soon as they are able to take care of themselves, young birds scatter out to find "fresh fields and pastures new." They seek to make new acquaintances and to see the country for themselves like any sensible people.

IN WESTERN LETTERS.

THE other night, Benjamin Ide Wheeler, late of Cornell, now president (blest be the luck!) of the University of California, was expressing to me his great surprise at finding in California such a collection of paintings as Irving M. Scott, the builder of the "Oregon," has hung in his home in San Francisco. Perhaps the surprise was not altogether the newly escaped Easterner's wonder at discovering among us the evidences of civilization. It may be that just such a collection, in taste and cost, is a trifle unexpected anywhere. The Baltimore 'prentice boy, who has grown up in a more generous land to be head of one of the largest and best shipyards in America, could probably afford to "match" coppers or canvasses with the average New York virtuoso.

But the striking thing to me is—though it does not surprise me—that in this noble company of Murillos, Rembrandts, Velasquez, Constables, Romneys, Ruysdaels, and that category, one California artist is absolutely at home. Mr. Scott has many Keiths; and "The Dawn," particularly, hung where it is exposed to the most merciless comparison with these masters, holds its head as high as any of them. It is a crucial test to put any modern artist to; but Wm. Keith can afford to stand it. One reason is that he is unspoiled by the modern commercialism. He paints as the immortals painted—as all must paint who are to be immortal—with absolute sincerity as well as mastery. He produces more, probably, than any two other painters in America—certainly as much as any three pot-boilers—and none of it calico. He can do it because he is full of material. He is never pumping from a dry reservoir. A long life of strenuous study and activity has equipped him, and I know of nothing more astonishing or more inspiring than to see him create enduring pictures as rapidly as another man would make sketches. And a man turned of 60, *growing* every day! Keith is doing nobler work than ever before—increasing a range of technic already marvelous, gaining higher mastery yet of the colors in which he was already a wizard, and unspoiled as a child.

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